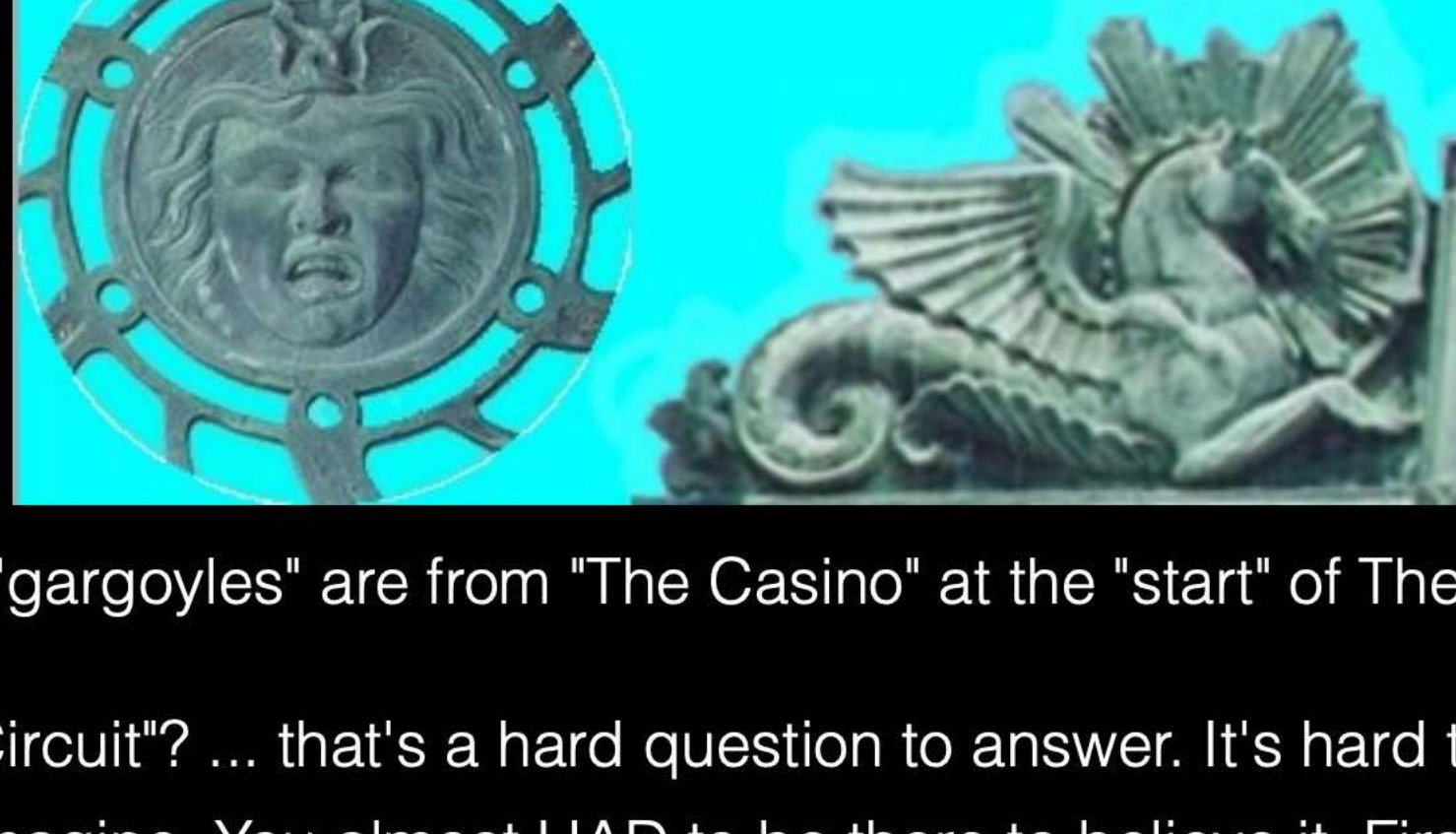


"The Circuit in Asbury Park New Jersey"

By: John Stoneman



These "gargoyles" are from "The Casino" at the "start" of The Circuit.

What was "The Circuit"? ... that's a hard question to answer. It's hard to describe, and even harder to imagine. You almost HAD to be there to believe it. First, let me say, it was many things to many different people! Basically, "The Circuit" refers to a "loop", or "track", if you will, that hundreds, or THOUSANDS of people would "flock" to on the weekends, just to drive around and around. During the summer months, there was "action" on the Circuit every night of the week, but Friday and Saturday nights were the busiest nights for sure. The Circuit represented to many people the "center of the universe". It was the "happening" place to be. Besides being an actual "physical location", it was also a lifestyle, state-of-mind, and "reason to live"! Most who "cruised the Circuit", were young people who night after night, were looking to meet people of the opposite sex. While others came for a more "serious" reason, to race. The Circuit was sort of a "moving city on wheels". There were hot-rods, crazy teen boys, crazy teen girls, and even bored "old people". You'd just drive around and around all night long, all week long, all summer long!

The Circuit was a combination of many different "scenes". Some came to drive around all night and never stop, while some came for the easy and prolific "bar hopping". Besides the continuous "parade" of hot-rods, motorcycles and teens in their parents car (that often, ended up "beat beyond belief")... there was the "Music Crowd". All along the Circuit were bars and clubs with live music. You could park your car and walk from bar to bar and see several great bands without driving between them. There was also the boardwalk, and all the associated attractions including what you'd expect. Arcades, rides, concession stands, mini golf, food of all types, gambling wheels, and yes, even Madame Marie (our local "spiritual guide").

There were a couple of parking lots at the end of town where you could "pull over" to talk, or if you were lucky (it was hard NOT to "score"!), you could "get romantic" in the back seat of a car. The hot-rods used the parking lot at the end of the circuit (the north end), to make last minute adjustments on their cars, or to "pay up" after loosing a "drag race" (an illegal but continuous event on the circuit). I can just sum it up by saying that "The Circuit" was an unbelievable mix of many different, and varied "interests" that *unbelievably*, somehow, all fit together into something the participants thought was "normal". It *WAS* normal for Asbury Park! You can think of it as Las Vegas, the Indy 500, and Marti Gras, all mixed together on steroids!

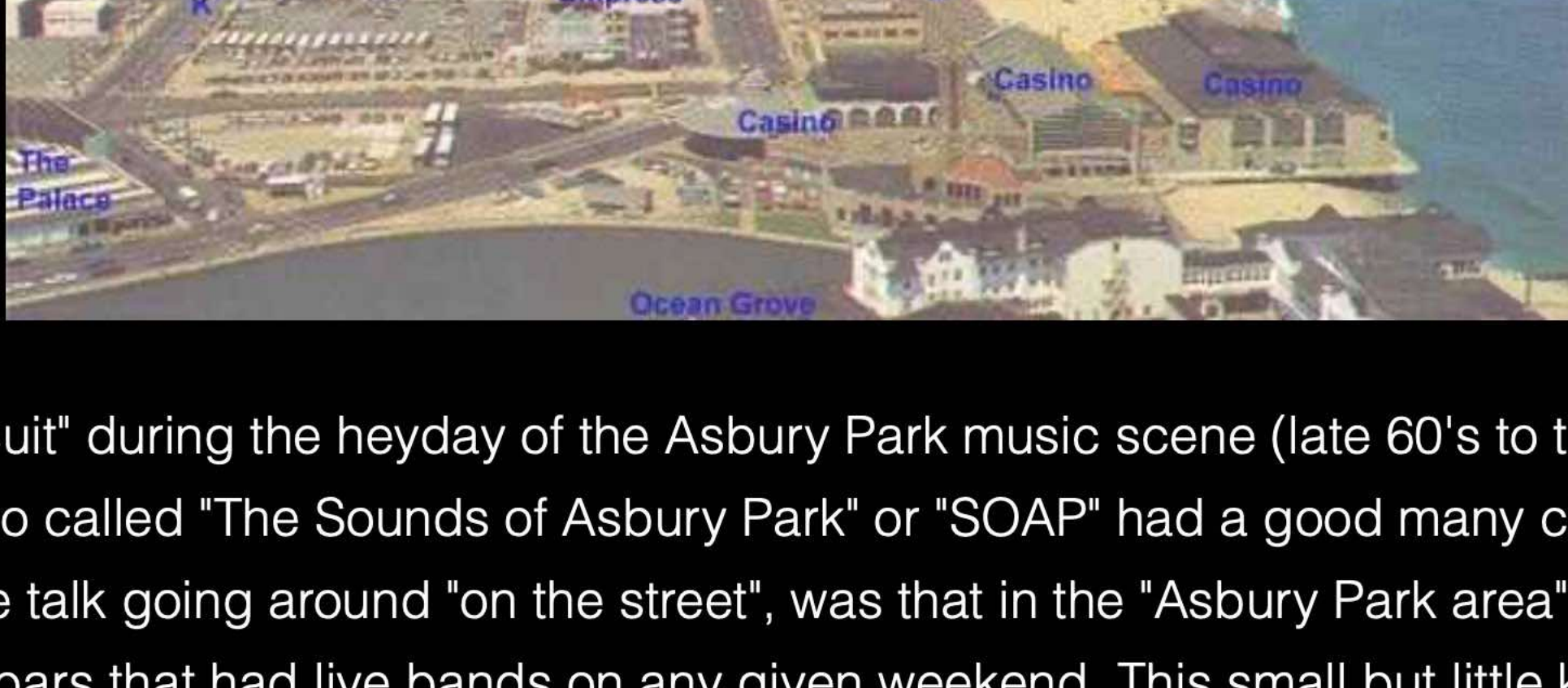
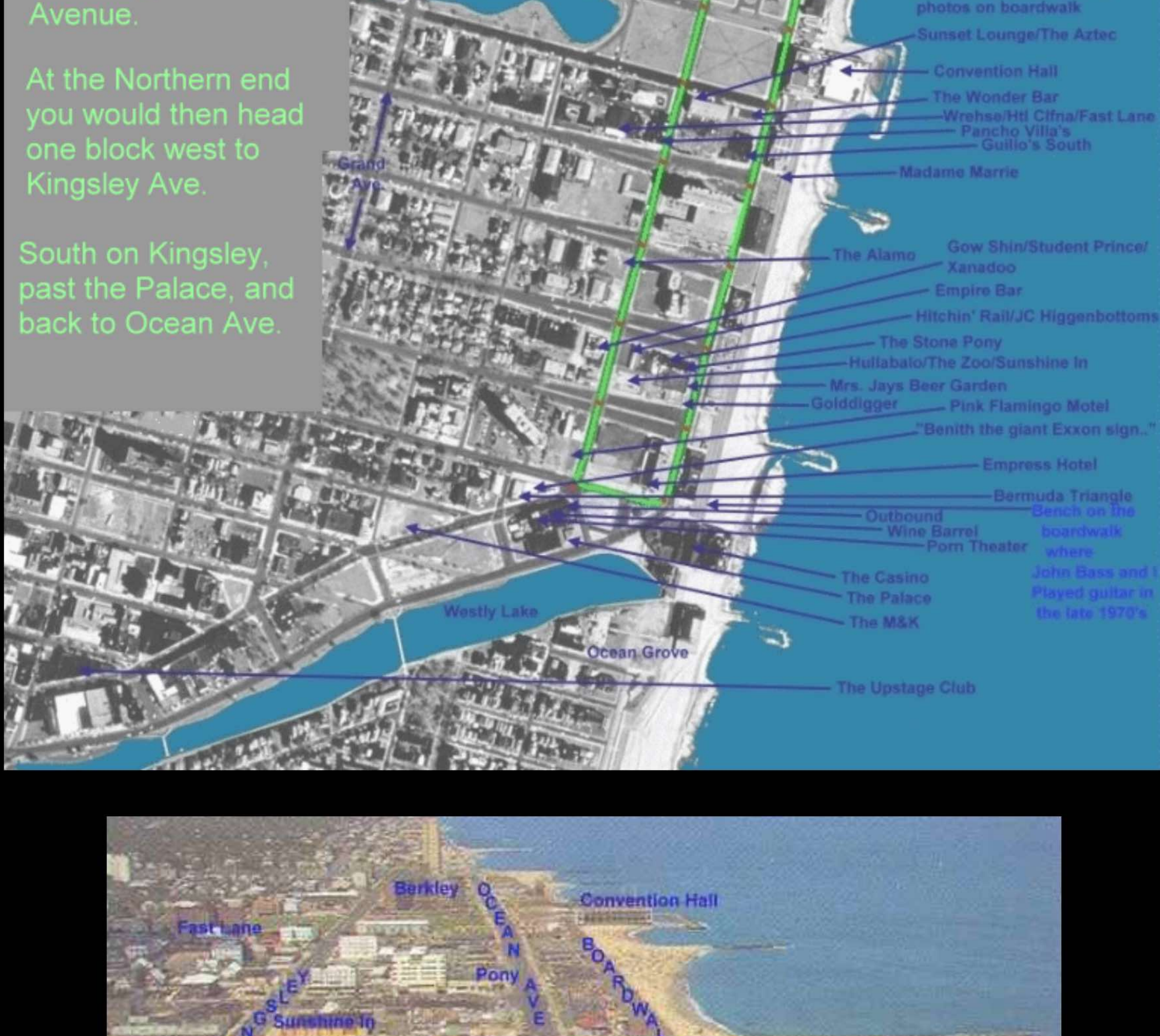
" The Circuit "

Asbury Park NJ

Four lanes of traffic would head north (one way) on Ocean Avenue.

At the Northern end you would then head one block west to Kingsley Ave.

South on Kingsley, past the Palace, and back to Ocean Ave.



"The Circuit" during the heyday of the Asbury Park music scene (late 60's to the early 80's), also called "The Sounds of Asbury Park" or "SOAP" had a good many clubs and bars. The talk going around "on the street", was that in the "Asbury Park area" there were 50 bars that had live bands on any given weekend. This small but little known "fact" may account for the many bands over the years that "originated" in Asbury Park, forming the Asbury music scene. Undoubtedly the most popular of Asbury Bands, was "Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes". When "The Jukes", as they were known to the locals, played the Stone Pony, large crowds would show up. "The Jukes" would draw upward of 2000 people, with anxious crowds "spilling out into the streets" in front of "The Pony" nearly blocking off the Circuit. The Jukes quickly became known as "the house band" of the Stone Pony, and among the faithful that just "had to be there" when the Jukes played, was Bruce Springsteen, and various "E-Streeters".

Here is a partial list of the bars and clubs in the "Circuit" area of Asbury Park.

Among the "Circuit" bars and clubs were:

- The Hullabaloo/The Zoo/The Sunshine Inn
- The Student Prince/Xanadu/Drift In/The Student Prince
- The Warehouse/Hotel California/Fast Lane/??/Fast Lane
- The Candy Cane Lounge
- Wonder Bar/Zone One/Wonder Bar/Lance and Debbie's
- Mrs. Jays Beer Garden/Now the Stony Pony outdoor stage
- Mrs. Jays Restaurant/The Stone Pony/Vinyl/Stone Pony
- Sunset Lounge/Aztec Lounge
- Bermuda Triangle
- Hitchin' Rail/JC Higgenbottoms
- The Bootlegger/Golddigger
- The Empire Bar
- Giulio's South
- The outbound/Wine Barrel
- The Alamo/One Sane Man
- The Rainbow Room
- and ... The Upstage Club

Just to name SOME of the bars on "The Circuit". There were many more "hole-in-the-walls" or hotel/motel lobby-bars But these above named were the basic "Circuit Bars" that contributed to the "SOUNDS OF ASBURY PARK."

Heading north on Ocean Ave, the "start" of the CircuitJust past the Empress Hotel, was the corner of 1st Ave and Ocean, near the Golddigger.



On up the road was The Pony, Giulio's South, The Wonderbar, on the left, and on the right was Convention Hall.

Mrs. Jays, sort of started out as a "beach bum", hippie-type joint, but then turned into a "biker hangout" in later years.



The "old" Wonderbar, once bragged "The largest bar in the world", (I remember them bragging the LONGEST bar in the world. As I recall, the claim was that there was a mile or a mile and a half of bar top in there. The bar(narrow) wrapped all around the room with several "L"s in it. I'm not sure if there was a mile of bar top. This is the bar where Springsteen first saw "The Big Man" preform.

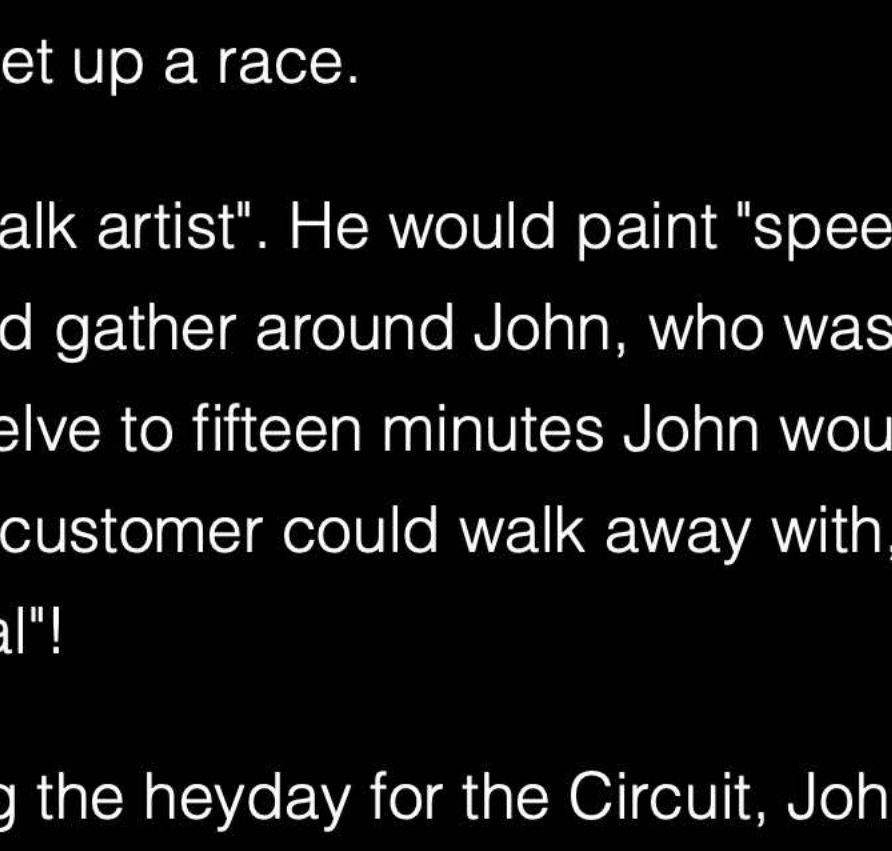
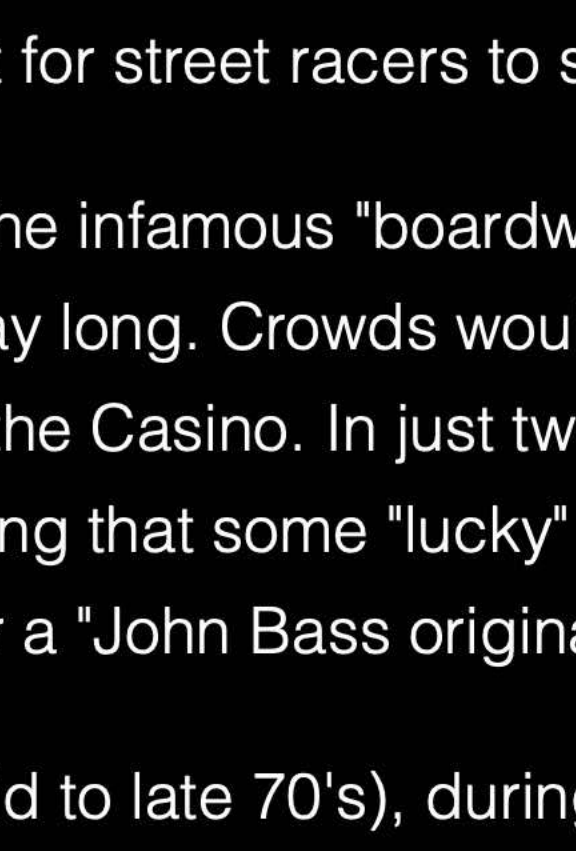


This is sort of what it looks like today, as "Lance and Debbie's". Lance, being Lance Larson, one of Asbury parks "legendary" guitarist and singers.

Then, on the back side of The Circuit, were the clubs like The Fast Lane, Student Prince, and The Sunshine In.



"The Student Prince" where Bruce played, later known as "The Drift In", was located on Kingsley.



Between the Palace(above left), and the Pink Flamingo Motel (above right), was a triangular lot that was an Exxon station in the 1970's. The photographer was standing "Beneath that giant Exxon sign" to take these pic's.

And let's not forget about the boardwalk!

During the day, the boardwalk, and the boardwalk crowd didn't have too much to do with the Circuit. At night it was a different story. Many of the people came out of the bars, and walked across the street, to the boardwalk for many reasons. Some to cool off, some just for a quiet place to talk, and some came for the "privacy" that could be found "under the boardwalk"! Very often, after the bars would close, the musicians would walk the boardwalk to unwind after a show. Some of the "hot rodders" would often walk the boardwalk while their cars "cooled off". The boardwalk arcades was also a good spot for street racers to set up a race.

John Bass was the infamous "boardwalk artist". He would paint "speed paintings" for the tourists all day long. Crowds would gather around John, who was set up on the boardwalk near the Casino. In just twelve to fifteen minutes John would paint a "full sized" wall painting that some "lucky" customer could walk away with, for just \$20. Twenty bucks for a "John Bass original"!

For years (the mid to late 70's), during the heyday for the Circuit, John Bass and I (John Stoneman) would play guitar at night on the boardwalk. When he was done painting for the day, I'd meet him there with our guitars. We played on the first bench, just outside of the Casino. From "our" bench, we could watch the endless parade of cars circling the Circuit, all night long. We would often play from dark to dawn, every night in the summer.